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LETTER DATED 22 JUNE 1998 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF BURKINA FASO TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In my capacity as the representative of the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, I have the honour to transmit herewith a press release on the mission undertaken by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) delegation of Heads of State mandated by the thirty-fourth summit meeting of OAU, in Ouagadougou, to visit Ethiopia and Eritrea to assist in bringing about a peaceful resolution to the conflict between the two countries.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Paul Robert TIENDRÉBÉOGO
Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Burkina Faso
Representative of the current Chairman
of OAU

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Annex

Press release on the visit of the Organization of African Unity delegation of Heads of State to Ethiopia and Eritrea, issued by the Information Division of the Organization of African Unity on 19 June 1998

The following press statement was read out to the media by the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) following the visit of the OAU delegation of Heads of State to Ethiopia and Eritrea:

There is no need to recall the circumstances which prompted the OAU summit meeting in Ouagadougou to send a high-level delegation of Heads of State to Ethiopia and Eritrea.

It may be useful however to recall the decision of the summit meeting on this grave issue:

(a) The summit expressed its deep concern over the escalation of the conflict;

(b) The summit urgently appealed to the two parties to simultaneously put an end to all hostilities and accept and implement the recommendations of the facilitators;

(c) The summit decided to send to both countries a delegation of Heads of State and Government.

The OAU high-level delegation was led by President Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, the current Chairman of OAU. It included President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, President Pasteur Bizimungu of Rwanda, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Djibouti, representing President Hassan Gouled Aptidon, current Chairman of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the Secretary-General of OAU.

Yesterday morning the delegation held a meeting with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. It then proceeded to Asmara, where it met with President Issaias Afeworki of Eritrea. The delegation had another meeting this morning with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.

The delegation listened carefully to both parties, which articulated their respective positions. It welcomed the disposition reiterated by both parties to seek a peaceful solution to the dispute and avoid further escalation of the conflict. It also welcomed the current climate of restraint and cessation of hostilities observed by both parties.

It will be recalled that the facilitators have put forward some proposals to both parties as a way of bridging the gap between them. These proposals were supported by the OAU summit meeting in Ouagadougou.

In the course of its discussions with both parties, the Ethiopian side reiterated its acceptance of the proposals of the facilitators. The Eritrean side stated clearly that the facilitation was over.

From this point of view, therefore, the delegation was not able at this juncture, to make headway with respect to the facilitators' recommendations.

OAU will nonetheless continue with its efforts. The issue is too serious and grave, and it deserves the continued attention of the Organization.

The OAU delegation continues therefore to be seized with the matter. It will continue with its efforts at the level of Ambassadors of the members of the delegation, Ministers and Heads of State. It will seek the cooperation of both parties to help them reach a peaceful solution. In this endeavour, the OAU delegation will build on the areas where there is convergence of approach and views between the two parties.

In the meantime, the OAU delegation urged both parties to continue to exercise maximum restraint and avoid taking any action that could escalate the tension and further harm the future relations between the two countries.